

President Fitts attends Washington Mardi Gras, speaks at economic panel

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President Michael Fitts participated in a panel discussion, hosted by the New Orleans Business Alliance, on the state of the New Orleans economy. LaTanja Silvester (right) of Resilience Force was also a panelist. (Photo provided by New Orleans Business Alliance)

Tulane President Michael A. Fitts traveled to Washington, D.C., last week to take part in the annual four-day gathering of Louisiana's government and business leaders in the nation's capital.

The goal of the trip was “to share with a statewide audience all the things that Tulane is doing in New Orleans and regionally,” said Sharon Courtney, vice president for government relations.

All the flights from Louisiana to Washington were booked with “parish presidents, city council members from around the state, the Louisiana congressional delegation and industry leaders from across the spectrum,” said Courtney.

It was an excellent opportunity for Fitts to meet with officials and industry people statewide to let them know “everything that’s happening at Tulane: the Tulane/LCMC partnership, our investment and expansion in downtown New Orleans, the work we’re doing to expand research commercialization to spin out new jobs, and our efforts to increase healthcare access,” said Courtney.

A highlight of the weekend was Fitts’ participation as a panelist at the New Orleans Business Alliance discussion on the state of the New Orleans economy, which was broadcast by WBOK Radio. Also on the panel were Greg Feirn of LCMC Health, LaTanja Silvester of Resilience Force, Deanna Rodriguez of Entergy New Orleans and Walt Leger III of New Orleans & Co.

“Clearly, we are focused on the success of New Orleans,” said Fitts, “how important it is to our success.”

“We are creating a downtown campus that, once complete, will contain at least 25 buildings and a robust infrastructure that will benefit the innovation district and all of New Orleans in terms of construction, businesses and jobs.”

“This is an exciting time,” said Fitts. “Forty percent of Tulane graduates over the last four years have stayed in the city after graduation, which helps propel the city forward.”

There’s a “secret sauce” to New Orleans that is critical to its success, Fitts added. “It’s the innovation, creativity, warmth. ... You don’t find that anywhere else.”

The weekend was capped off Saturday night with the Mystic Krewe of Louisianians Mardi Gras Ball, a tradition that goes back to the 1940s.

Chaired by U.S. Representative Julia Letlow, a former staff member at Tulane’s School of Medicine, the Mardi Gras Ball had as honored guests Tulane football players and Ben Weiner Director of Athletics Troy Dannen.

Dannen brought the American Athletic Conference Football Championship trophy to the ball for all the guests to admire. Members of the Tulane Marching Band were there, too, with Fitts and Tulane alumni, who led the Green Wave parade into the party.